

COVER STORY

Magician of The Musical

Lloyd Webber scores again with Phantom

All right, gentlemen, we all agree there is nothing wrong with the Broadway musical that a few hits wouldn't cure. But what we need is some new ideas.

O.K., how about this: long-haired hippie from working-class family in ancient Palestine (salt of the earth dad, saintly mom) falls in with tough crowd of long-shoremen, starts proletarian pacifist movement and gets offed by protofascist pigs from Rome.

Never work: too depressing, and it lacks an upbeat ending. No love interest either. Next?

Spunky Argentine fire-cracker rides casting couch to boffo b.o. in Buenos Aires, weds political top dog, rips off nation, gets cancer and dies.

Are you kidding? Too depressing, lacks an upbeat ending, and no one has ever paid a nickel to see anything about South America. Next?

Well, there's the one about cats singing poetry...

Forget it; pigs will fly first. Ditto your other crazy notion, the one about the roller-skating trains. What else?

Ugly guy who hangs out in basement of Paris Opera gets crush on cute chorister, secretly preps her as headliner, goes berserk when boyfriend comes on scene, writes opera with her in lead, gets ditched by girl and crawls into hole to die.

Not too bright, man. Depressing, lacks an upbeat ending, and the opera-house setting is a major turnoff. Broadway audiences are not about to put out big bucks to watch a downer like that, for crying out loud. Doesn't anybody here have an idea for a hit musical?

Try this one: shy middle-class British kid grows up listening to Mozart and Richard Rodgers, teams with buddy to write school musical, is discovered by slumming music critic, goes on to pen

smash biblical epic *Jesus Christ Superstar* and monster hit *Evita*, splits with pal, has megatriumphs with *Cats* and *Starlight Express*, now showing in Melbourne, then comes up with extra-hot spook, *The Phantom of the Opera*. Along the way swaps bell-bottoms for swank Belgravia flat, 1,350-acre English country estate, choice property on the French Riviera, \$6 million apartment in Manhattan, private jet, beautiful second wife and a worldwide musical empire that, conservatively, rings his personal cash register to the tune of \$12 million a year.

Hmmm. Talent, friendship, strife, love interest, money—it seems to have everything. Now there's uplift for you! We'll call it Andrew Lloyd Webber and His Amazing Technicolor Career. I think we've got a winner!

He is an unlikely superstar. Of average height, his long hair a tousled brown arch across his forehead, the man in the tailored, gray pinstriped flannel suit digging into his sole at La Côte Basque could be mistaken for just another of Manhattan's prosperati

were it not for one distinctive habit. Sometimes it comes during pauses in conversation, other times in midthought. Ever so softly, but frequently and with total absorption, Andrew Lloyd Webber is humming to himself.

Few people overhearing him would suspect it, but those barely audible hums are the stuff dream musicals are made of. Out of them, Lloyd Webber, 39, has spun a worldwide empire unmatched in the history of musical theater. With one exception, the ill-starred *Jeeves* of 1975, Lloyd Webber has scored an unbroken string of triumphs over the past 15 years. His most financially successful show, *Cats*, has had



Onstage: Lloyd Webber



Brightman and Crawford in *The Phantom of the Opera*

19 productions in cities ranging from Budapest to Tokyo to Sydney to Stockholm; eleven of them are still running. *Cats* has racked up total box-office receipts of more than \$425 million.

When Lloyd Webber's latest show, *The Phantom of the Opera*, opened on Broadway in January, he had three hits playing simultaneously in both London and New York City. It is only the second time a composer has ever pulled off such a double hat trick. The first was in 1983, and, of course, it was Lloyd Webber who did it. In New York, *Evita* ran for almost four years; *Cats* is still selling out five years after its opening.

the young girls spinning on the high bar. In her hand she holds a rubber hose with which she swats the girls on the soles of their feet whenever they fail to keep their toes pointed during a routine.

Some of the athletes have been known to rebel. Three years ago, several national soccer team members walked out in protest against the rigorous training schedule. Last year a group of judoka refused to return to Taenung after their vacation. In both cases, differences between coaches and their charges were eventually resolved, and the athletes resumed training.

Most of the top performers invited to Taenung like the center's discipline and see it as helping them to stay focused on their training. Some, like Weight Lifter Hwang Woo Won, 26, have been working out at Taenung for more than seven years. "We have some restrictions," he concedes, "but for an athlete it is better to have concentrated periods of work with no distractions." Generally, the athletes are allowed weekend leave after training on Friday, as long as they return Sunday night. Visitors are permitted, but never after curfew. On Saturday nights Hwang goes out with his pals for a few beers at a nearby tavern. For those who stay in camp, a recreation hall offers video games, a snack bar and a movie theater. Money is not a problem: each athlete receives a \$120 monthly allowance, close to South Korea's monthly minimum wage. Room and board are free.

The camp caters to a wide range of ages and sports disciplines. The oldest athlete is Equestrian Chun Chae In, 41. The youngest is diminutive (4 ft. 5 in., 91 lbs.) Gymnast Kim Yun Ji, 14, a ninth-grader who attends classes at the center in the morning and trains in the afternoon. This is her first time away from home in a suburb of Seoul, where her parents run a restaurant. She admits that she is "sometimes scared" that she will crack under the pressure of trying to make the Olympic team. Yet she appears to have adjusted well to the routine, and finds that she has little time to think about her family or friends. "I don't miss my mom much," she says, "because I can see her every weekend."

Taenung was founded as a training facility after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, and was initially funded by the Korea Amateur Sports



The youngest hopeful: Gymnast Kim Yun Ji, 14, on the parallel bars



Heads up: volleyball players at practice



Taking a break: Judo Star Lee Kyung Keun awaits his turn on the mat

Association. Only after South Korea was awarded the 1988 Summer Games did the government begin subsidizing the center in earnest. Its administrator, Kim Sung Jip, 69, a two-time Olympic bronze medalist in weight lifting, commutes to Taenung from his home five miles away in the southern part of Seoul, arriving every morning at 6 for the group workouts. He sees the camp, with all its strict discipline, as the "only way" a small nation like South Korea can compete with athletes from Communist countries, whose governments spend large amounts on sports development.

Taenung's growth, especially since 1980, mirrors South Korea's rise as an Asian sports power. At the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, South Korea won 19 medals, more than it had captured in toto since independence in 1948. South Koreans performed especially well in contact sports—judo, wrestling and boxing. While Japan gathered 32 medals at Los Angeles, by the time the 1986 Asian Games rolled around in Seoul, South Korea had moved to second place in gold medals, behind China and ahead of Japan, which finished third.

The victory over Japan, which ruled the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945 as a colonial power, marked a first for South Korea in international competition, and the triumph is still savored. In fact, anticipation of the impending clash with Japan permeates most conversations among the athletes at Taenung. "I don't care who my opponents will be in the Olympics," declares Kim Jae Yup, 22, Seoul's top hope in the 60-kg (132-lb.) class for a gold in judo, "but I won't lose to a Japanese."

Administrator Kim Sung Jip claims that the reason for Japan's slippage at the Asian Games was lack of commitment on the part of its athletes. In fact, he contends, the whole developed world is going soft because of easy living. "We will have the same problem," he says, "if our per capita income reaches the \$5,000 level." In that sense, as a sports nationalist, Kim remains grateful that South Korea's per capita income is still below \$3,000. This, combined with the tough regime at Taenung, he believes, should give his athletes something of an edge at the games next September.

—By Lloyd Garrison.
Reported by Barry Hillenbrand
and K.C. Hwang/Seoul



elaborate, evocative and beguiling, the work is the natural expression of a classically trained child of the rock revolution

And now comes *Phantom*. Rarely had a show been so eagerly anticipated, and never had one enjoyed such a box-office buildup. Before opening in late January, it had already taken in an unprecedented \$16 million in advance sales, \$4 million more than the previous record holder, *Les Misérables*. On the day the Majestic Theater box office opened in November, buyers—many of whom had queued up in the cold overnight—snapped up \$920,271 worth of tickets, easily breaking the one-day record of \$477,275 set by *Les Miz*. As in London, where *Phantom* is the theatrical event of the season, seeing the show is an exercise in long-range planning. Want a

pair of \$50 orchestra seats for an evening performance? The first available dates are around Thanksgiving. With *Phantom* productions already scheduled for Vienna and Tokyo, and others on the way, this is one specter that should be haunting theaters for years to come.

To keep tabs on his burgeoning realm, Lloyd Webber is a man in almost perpetual motion. During the year between the London and New York openings of *Phantom*, he has circled the globe in his leased Hawker Siddeley 125 jet, making arrangements for new productions and spot-checking the quality level of old ones. "I have been all over the world until I

hardly know what time of day it is," he says. It doesn't matter: the sun never sets on this new British empire.

Between trips, Lloyd Webber has overseen the continuing restoration of London's Palace Theater, a Victorian landmark that he bought for \$2 million in 1983; expanded the dairy farm on Sydmonton Court, his estate in Hampshire, and planted 50,000 trees in an effort to reverse soil erosion; and with his wife, Soprano (and *Phantom* Star) Sarah Brightman, 27, acquired a nine-room duplex apartment on the 60th floor of Manhattan's Trump Tower, as well as a seaside villa in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat in the south

of France. He has indulged his hobbies of collecting pre-Raphaelite art and 18th century English furniture, added to his cave of fine wines, and bought Sarah a bracelet with a jeweled snake head that used to belong to the Duchess of Windsor.

Musically he is just as busy: discussing a movie deal with Universal Pictures for a cinematic version of his roller-skating-trains musical *Starlight*, bruited the possibility of writing a movie score for his Trump Tower neighbor Steven Spielberg, and launching plans for a U.S. production company with Director Harold Prince to seek out and stage new American musicals. "Music is born into Andrew," says Brightman. "Music just comes out of him. Without it, he wouldn't be Andrew."

In his Manhattan eyrie in January, Lloyd Webber worked with Lyricists Don Black and Charles Hart on his next musical, *Aspects of Love*, studied portfolios of photos in search of a female lead for *Phantom's* production in Japan, and kept a watchful eye on the Broadway incarnation. "He monitors every word and orchestrates every aspect of the production," says Black. "He is good at casting, costumes, orchestration, design, marketing. Nothing slips through the net." When he does unwind, it is generally at his Steinway grand piano. "Want to hear some tunes?" he will ask, and a moment later will deliver several songs from *Aspects* in the tuneless dee-dee-dah-dum voice universally adopted by composers.

In England, he and Sarah spend as much time as possible at Sydmonton, near the *Watership Down* country of Novelist Richard Adams, where his extensive holdings have made him the squire of two villages. The oldest part of his brick manor house dates back to the 16th century. Each July the estate serves as the site of Lloyd Webber's private Sydmonton Festival, where the composer tries out his works in progress before a specially invited audience. A connoisseur of old English religious architecture, Lloyd Webber often spends Sundays driving around with Sarah to visit churches.

What prompts all this frenetic activity? With a secure place in the annals of musical theater, a personal net worth more than \$200 million and all the creature comforts that attend such a favorable balance sheet, Lloyd Webber would seem to have everything. It may sound like an old joke, but rich and famous as he is, he still craves one gratification: critical respectability, especially in the U.S.

Since 1971, when the iconoclastic *Superstar* shattered Broadway tradition with raucous electric guitars, grinding dissonances and a subject that was, to say the least, unorthodox, it has been fashionable to dismiss Lloyd Webber as a panderer to the basest melodic cravings of the mass audience, hammering home a few repetitive themes amid overblown orchestral climaxes and distracting technological gimmickry. His scores have been derided as derivative and too dependent on pastiche—meretricious parrotings of his Broadway betters (Rodgers) and his operatic antecedents (Puccini).

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR



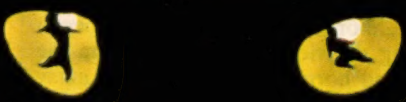
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DONALD COOPER

"People talk about commercialism," Lloyd Webber says, "but in actual fact, I really fight it an awful lot. I don't think that way. I put an awful lot into these scores. It is not just a matter of two or three songs repeated and repeated. If people think it is, they are crazy. The reason why the public responds is that the pieces are very rich."

Lloyd Webber's rise to prominence is something of a historical anomaly. Since the heyday of Gilbert and Sullivan and the demise of the Viennese operetta, the leadership in musical theater has belonged to Americans. British musicals, when they were considered at all, conjured up images of aging vaudevillians with straw boaters and canes barking strophic ballads at nodding pensioners. That has all changed. Now, not only a stirring new work like *Les Misérables* but even a relic like *Me and My Girl* can be shipped across the Atlantic from London to win a passionate following on the Great White Way.

This has caused more than a little resentment on Broadway, not least against Lloyd Webber himself, since it sometimes seems that half the musicals running at any one time are his. What American can compete with him? Charles Strouse has not had a hit since *Annie* (1977). Marvin Hamlisch's *A Chorus Line* is still strutting its stuff, but the show opened in 1975. Jerry Herman's 1983 cross-dressed love story *La Cage aux Folles* packed in the tourists, but its appeal came more from the frisson of seeing men in black lace and garter belts than from any of its songs.

The sinuous melodies and intricate lyrics of Stephen Sondheim, the leading American composer of musicals, have made for an impressive body of work, including the delicate *Pacific Overtures*, the sanguinary *Sweeney Todd* and his new hit, *Into the Woods*. But Lloyd Webber's sure, if more conventional, sense of musical structure, his adroit handling of the orchestra (unlike Rodgers and Sondheim, Lloyd Webber generally makes his own orchestrations) and his willingness to tackle big subjects bespeak a talent no less sophisticated.

Indeed, except for Sondheim, few American theater composers can match Lloyd Webber's strong classical background. His father, who died in 1982, was Composer William Lloyd Webber, director of the London College of Music, and his mother Jean is a piano teacher. His brother Julian, now 36, became a noted concert cellist. Partly because of his bona fides, however, he feels that his field "inhabits a no-man's land." Classical reviewers, he observes, do not consider musical shows a part of their world, while drama critics do not always pick up on the subtleties of his music.

Colleagues do, though. Tenor Plácido Domingo sang the premiere of Lloyd Webber's 1985 *Requiem* under Conductor Lorin Maazel, who also recorded the orchestral version of Lloyd Webber's *Variations*. Maazel, former music director of the Cleveland Orchestra and a longtime

Lloyd Webber supporter, praises the composer's "great talent—I would even say genius" for melody.

For audiences, Lloyd Webber's appeal is beyond dispute. "He may not be Mozart or Beethoven to the Germans," says Edda Sels, press spokeswoman for the popular production of *Cats* in Hamburg, "but he can combine classical and popular music in such a way that it appeals to audiences who want both 'entertaining' and 'serious' music." Director Keita Asari, whose Shiki theater company, the largest in Japan, has staged *Superstar*, *Evita* and *Cats*, calls Lloyd Webber a "genius who unfolds melodies through various modes that somewhere reverberate classical music. That's the reason he is universally loved."

Practically alone among present-day theater composers, Lloyd Webber repeatedly hits the Top Ten with his songs: *I Don't Know How to Love Him* from *Superstar*; *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina* from *Evita*; *Memory*, the instant standard from *Cats*. Four songs from *Phantom* have

made the British charts. But despite his unique crossover appeal, his scores are far from cheap tunesmithery. In addition to their obvious debt to rock, *Superstar*, *Evita* and *Cats* also bristle with some hair-raising atonal passages, while *Phantom's* glorious credo, *The Music of the Night*, contains one of Lloyd Webber's most daring dissonant endings. Overt classical references abound: *Cats* has a fugue, the *Dance* section of *Song & Dance* is an extended set of variations on Paganini's 24th *Caprice*, and *Phantom* boasts an intricate sextet called *Prima Donna* that is reminiscent of Donizetti. (*Song & Dance* played for 13 months in New York City. It was cobbled together from Lloyd Webber's song cycle *Tell Me on a Sunday* and *Variations*, a piece for cello and rock ensemble originally written for Julian.) Eclectic it may be, but Lloyd Webber's best work has synthesized his disparate influences into the convincing, natural expression of a classically trained child of the rock revolution.

That child was born into a rambling, bohemian flat in London's South Kensington neighborhood. At three Andrew began studying the violin; later he took up the piano and horn. "It was extremely noisy around our house," remembers Brother Julian. "I'd be scraping away on the cello, and Andrew would be bashing away on the piano." Adding to the happy din was John Lill, now a well-known British concert pianist, who was a member of the Lloyd Webber household and, more than anyone else, steered Andrew toward concerts and operas.

Andrew wrote his first tune at nine, and three years later began mounting mock musicals in a toy theater whose stage was an old record turntable. At about this time, an aunt whetted his theatrical passion when she took the boy to see *South Pacific*, which remains his favorite musical. At 14 he won a scholarship to London's Westminster School and produced three now forgotten student shows.

Lloyd Webber attended Magdalen

Chills, Thrills and Trapdoors

What would provide the most stimulating change of pace after *Starlight Express's* romance of the rails? For Andrew Lloyd Webber it was the sweep and dash of pure old-fashioned romance. He found it in French Novelist Gaston Leroux's 1910 thriller *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*, long a standby for stage and screen adaptations (notably Lon Chaney's 1925 silent horror film). The version devised by Lloyd Webber and Librettist Richard Stilgoe dispensed with much of the novel's narrative superstructure to focus on two characters: the gruesomely disfigured genius who haunts the Paris Opera and the young Swedish soprano, Christine Daaé, who is the object of his unholy affections.

As the principal lyricist, Lloyd Webber chose Charles Hart, 26, a novice who had only one previous, unperformed musical to his credit; in counterbalance, the composer tapped the veteran director Hal Prince, 59, who had contributed so much to the success of *Evita*. Lloyd Webber composed the role of Christine with his wife Sarah Brightman's crystalline voice and fragile Pre-Raphaelite looks in mind. The trick was casting the Opera Ghost. His choice was British Actor Michael Crawford, 45, whom he had heard sing in the 1979 London show *Flowers for Algernon* and who had appeared in such films as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *The Jokers*. "The moment I saw him with Sarah at dinner for the first time, I knew there was no point in discussing the casting any further," remembers Lloyd Webber. "The way he hypnotized her with his view of what he thought the Phantom could be... I just tiptoed off and left them. I phoned Hal and said, 'It's cast.'"

Crawford, who had trained as a boy soprano under Composer Benjamin Britten, responded immediately to the

Phantom's soaring tenor line. "I had only to hear the first eight or so bars to know that *Phantom* was something quite special," he says. "The score sent chills down my spine the first time I heard it, and still does. Andrew's got me singing from the bottom of my heart to the top hair on my head."

For a while last year, it appeared that Brightman might not be allowed to repeat her role in New York. Actors' Equity objected to her being cast in the Broadway production, rather

than an American actress, on the ground that Brightman was not an international star. Lloyd Webber was furious. His implied threat of no-Sarah, no-*Phantom* eventually prevailed, but under an agreement with the union, Brightman will play Christine for only six months. To preserve her voice, she is appearing in six of the eight weekly performances; American Patti Cohenour is singing the other two. (Crawford's contract is for nine months and all eight performances.) Brightman was philosophical about the compromise. "I would have been disappointed because I worked on that part for three years and I created it," she said. "I might have disliked seeing another actress taking over all the things I worked out, but I would have gone on to the next thing. It's stupid getting annoyed in this business."

Like *Cats* and *Starlight Express*, though, *Phantom* is proving "cast-proof," for much of its attraction lies in its spectacular coups de théâtre inspired by Victorian stage machinery. Among the highlights: a boat gliding

across a gloomy underground lake, and a chandelier that appears to crash onto the audience at the end of Act I. The multiple trapdoors that create many of the illusions—there are 102 tiny ones to accommodate the candles that rise from the gloom to illuminate the Phantom's subterranean realm—are all controlled by computer. Says Will Bowen, assistant production manager in London: "The gloss is Victorian, but it took high tech to make it look that way."



In rehearsal: *Phantom*, soprano and composer

College at Oxford, in part because he had heard it harbored some of Britain's most promising lyricists. But the man who turned out to be the Oscar Hammerstein to his Rodgers came in the person of Tim Rice, a London law student with a penchant for pop music. Introduced by a London publisher, the pair hit it off at once, and Andrew promptly dropped out of Oxford. To hone his technique, he enrolled at the Royal College of Music. His father, surprisingly, warned him not to let the school educate away his natural gifts, and Lloyd Webber left after one year.

He and his new partner were an odd match: Rice tall, affable, gregarious; Lloyd Webber slender, introspective, subdued. Rice's lyrics were hard-edged and cynical; Lloyd Webber's music lush and tuneful ("Tim can never write 'I love you,'" says Lloyd Webber. "It's always 'I love you, but . . .'"). Their first show, *The Likes of Us*, about a Victorian philanthropist named Dr. Bernardo, was never commercially produced; "square and dated," explained Rice. For their next try they took some really dated material: the Old Testament.

The show was *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, written in 1967 for London's St. Paul's School, and it remains one of the most winning compositions. Originally a 25-minute piece for the school's younger boys, it was expanded for a performance at Central Hall, Westminster, where by chance it was heard by Derek Jewell, a music critic for the London *Sunday Times*. His unexpected rave led to a recording. Lloyd Webber's deft gift for parody (the Elvis homage of *Pharaoh's Story*) and melodic invention (Joseph's moving anthem *Close Every Door*) captured a wide audience. "Without realizing it," recalls Rice, "we were breaking new ground by forgetting about Rodgers and Hammerstein."

A false start with a show about Richard the Lion-Hearted sent Rice back to the Bible for inspiration, and he found it in the greatest story ever told. *Jesus Christ Superstar* was an instant hit, first as a single pop song, then as a double album, finally as a 1971 stage show in New York. It was not the first rock musical—Galt MacDermot's *Hair* preceded it, as did the Who's "rock opera" *Tommy*—but its impact was extraordinary. Lloyd Webber hated Director Tom O'Horgan's lurid, heavenzapoppin' staging, which featured a transvestite Herod, Judas in silver briefs and Christ emerging from a huge chalice clad in a \$20,000 glittering robe. Christian as well as Jewish groups protested the show as offensive, but it ran for 720 performances before heading off to the West End and more than 20 other countries.

At about this time, Lloyd Webber married Sarah Tudor Hugill, whom he had met at a party when they were teenagers. As this partnership was formed, the other one in his life, with Rice, began to crack under the stress of *Superstar*. While Lloyd Webber felt embarrassed and humiliated

REX FEATURES



In *Phantom*, echoes of Salleri and Meyerbeer by a master of pastiche and parody

by what he regarded as the "travesty" of the New York production, the more phlegmatic Rice was content to let it run its course and enjoy the success. A few months later, when Rice dropped out of a treatment of P.G. Wodehouse's unflappable butler, *Jeeves*, Lloyd Webber enlisted Playwright Alan Ayckbourn and put the show on the boards in Bristol. It eventually closed in London after 47 performances—a failure that continues to rankle the fierce perfectionist.

The last Rice-Lloyd Webber show was also the best and the most daring: *Evita*. The authors were condemned for glorifying the right-wing Eva and Juan Perón, even though they intended the show as an allegory of the deteriorating political situation in England in the mid-'70s. Like *Superstar*, *Evita* was first released as a record. The task of getting it onstage devolved upon Director Prince; watching Prince put the show to-

gether turned out to be a most instructive lesson for Lloyd Webber. "When I came into *Evita*, there was no script, just a lot of numbers in a shape to tell a story," remembers Prince. "We moved some numbers around and made a straight line, added tension and all the rest. To me this was a strange process of coming up with a show, working from an album backward. "Prince's starkly effective staging echoed Lloyd Webber's view of the music ("cold, cold, cold").

But not even *Evita's* success could patch over the growing rift between composer and lyricist, and so they parted professional company. "I'm not as interested in working for the sake of working," said Rice. "Andrew wants to be in the center of the musical-theater world all the time." Since the breakup, Rice has had a modest London hit with his Plantagenet saga *Blondel* and a major triumph in *Chess*, a cynical look at a championship chess match between a Soviet and an American

that boasts a brilliant score by Bjoörn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, two members of the rock group ABBA. In 1986 he reunited briefly with his former partner on a 30-minute private entertainment called *Cricket* for Queen Elizabeth's 60th birthday.

Lloyd Webber was on his own in his next project, an audacious attempt to set T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* to music. He turned to the innovative director Trevor Nunn and the brilliant designer John Napier to transform his plotless feline frolic into the spectacular *Cats*. Nunn found that the increasingly confident composer's sense of musical structure was "fantastically theatrical" and that what Lloyd Webber required of his collaborators was "ways in which his musical conception could be given a narrative or some character validation."

Cats marked another notable departure for Lloyd Webber. During rehearsals he fell in love with Brightman, who was gambling as one of the show's kittens after a stint as lead singer of the sexy rock group Hot Gossip. In 1983 his twelve-year marriage ended in divorce, and he wed Brightman the following year. Custody of the two children, Imogen, now 10, and Nicholas, 8, went to their mother.

Lloyd Webber's next show *Starlight*, which opened in London in 1984, was also directed by Nunn and designed by Napier, but this time the cooperative effort was less happy. What was conceived as a small collection of genre songs (pop, rock, mock-soul) for children, like *Joseph*, emerged instead as an overblown extravaganza that the composer, despite his initial enthusiasm for the production, later disowned. "It was a mistake to have put it anywhere near where it could be considered a Broadway musical," Lloyd Webber says, though he still defends it as a vehicle that brings to the theater people who do not ordinarily attend. Aside from the high-tech overkill of the staging, Lloyd Webber's heart was not really in the writing; he had come too far from *Joseph* to be able to recapture the spontaneous joy of the earlier piece. Although he expected several singles from *Starlight* to top the charts, none did. "That area of pop is probably no longer in my grasp," he admits today.

Phantom, then, is the gauntlet that Lloyd Webber has thrown down to challenge his critics to take him seriously. As lush and ornate as the Paris Opera in which it is set, *Phantom* is the composer's most elaborate, beguiling score. It is also the most frankly operatic, not only in its parodies of period works by such composers as Salieri and Meyerbeer but in the way it has been written. Like an opera, *Phantom* is almost entirely sung, and its

characters are outfitted with sharply etched musical motifs. Except for the title song, there is no rock music in the score; instead it is a sweeping, romantic evocation of Belle Epoque Paris for coloratura soprano, lyric tenor and full-dress symphony orchestra.

Lloyd Webber believes music should drive a show, giving it life and shape, soul and heart. "Audiences in popular theater are much more prepared to surrender themselves to a composer going down the route of the opera," he says. "In fact, they demand that the composer is more in the



Husband and wife after the London opening of *Phantom*

"Music is born into him. Without it, he wouldn't be Andrew."

driver's seat than they did 15 years ago. I would never again give my score to a director until I feel it is as near finished as I can possibly make it.

“What do we mean by opera, anyway?” wonders Lloyd Webber. “And where does that put *Phantom*?

Obviously there is a world of difference between *Phantom* and something like *Sugar Babies*. But there is no difference today between opera and serious musical theater.” Indeed, the line between the two forms is becoming increasingly blurred. Postwar operatic history is a Sargasso Sea of shipwrecked hulks, great lumbering Establishment vessels launched with much fanfare but quickly sent to the bottom under their own weight. Many opera-house successes have come instead from composers outside the academic tradition.

Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* opened the season at the English National Opera last fall. *Sweeney Todd* has been performed by the New York City Opera. Last year *Evita* was produced at the Staats-operette in Dresden.

Lloyd Webber's forthcoming show, *Aspects of Love*, is not likely to be produced at the Metropolitan Opera House any time soon, but it appears to be the closest thing to a conventional opera he has yet composed. Based on the 1955 novel by David Garnett, a member of the Bloomsbury group, *Aspects* is an intimate chamber work that examines the lives and loves of a small circle of friends. “*Aspects* will come out closer in scale to a kind of Mozartian piece,” promises the composer. “It will require from me a very firm technique, and the scenes will have to be far more set pieces of drama than anything I have done. So it is another move along.”

The “move along” has been a professional tenet with Lloyd Webber, who leaves as little to chance as possible. His whole life and career can be seen in terms of his desire to master a situation, then go beyond it. On the most basic level, there is his insistence on dominating everything related to his music. With a nose for business as keen as his faculty for churning out hits, Lloyd Webber keeps the reins of power tightly in his hand. No matter where he is, he is often on the phone to the staff at his London-based production company, the Really Useful Group, or to one of the small number of theater professionals who make up his de facto stock company, among them Producer Cameron Mackintosh, Lyricist Black and Directors Nunn and Prince.

The Really Useful Group (the name derives from the Really Useful Engine, a recurring phrase in the Wilbert Awdry series of children's books that enthralled Lloyd Webber as a boy) comprises a producing organization, a music-publishing company, a record division, a video company, Aurum Press and the Palace Theater London Ltd., the last a separate entity that currently houses the London production of *Les Miserables*.

Lloyd Webber is a nonexecutive member of the board (so is Rice) who owns about 40% of the stock but is not actively involved in management. When the company went public two years ago, he netted \$20 million. He is also the company's prime asset: this is the third year of a seven-year contract under which anything he writes has to go to the Group.

His gifts as an entrepreneur are formidable. “Andrew is a brilliant natural exploiter of his own shows,” says Mackintosh, who co-produced *Cats*, *Song & Dance* and *Phantom*. “It runs parallel with

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his creative talent. He understands showmanship: knowing how to launch a song, finding the right artist to promote it, doing the right programs and interviews. All of these things he does with consummate skill." Probably only Lloyd Webber could have written his *Requiem* as a memorial to his father and then turned the *Pie Jesu* into a hit song (sung by Brightman and a boy soprano) that climbed to No. 1 on the British charts. To some, that was marketing savvy; to others, tasteless calculation. "It was not in one's head that one could have a Top Ten hit from a piece in Latin," Lloyd Webber told a British interviewer. "But that doesn't mean I'm not delighted that it happened."

Beneath his deceptively placid public persona, Lloyd Webber seethes with artistic temperament. In private, some of his acquaintances grumble about his explosive temper, but few dare to confront him, presumably because of his power and influence. While his first wife was still married to him, she was quoted as saying, "He never relaxes. He likes to have something to fuss about. He is exhausting to be with."

Choreographer Gillian Lynne, who worked with him on both *Cats* and *Phantom*, says, "Andrew always has one night when he has a fit. He can become like a shark with anger. He is passionate. But that is so much better than people who settle, isn't it?" One such moment occurred during rehearsals for *Starlight*, when Lloyd Webber argued vehemently with Nunn over two bars of music the director had inserted in order to help the skaters negotiate a dangerous maneuver.

Insisted Nunn: "You either have those bars, Andrew, or you'll have a few roller-skating deaths." "O.K.," Lloyd Webber shot back, "either we have deaths or I withdraw the score!" The composer prevailed (and the skaters survived).

"I must be the most intolerable person to know because I think about music all the time," says Lloyd Webber. His basic shyness and his air of indifference to most other subjects make him seem brusque and aloof. "Andrew is a very determined person, and he's very competitive," says his mother. "He has a one-track mind. He has a brisk manner and can be offhand. He has his difficult side—he has a temper and terrific swings of mood."

When engaged in a musical discussion, Lloyd Webber fairly bursts with enthusiasm, sometimes speaking so fast he begins to trip over his tongue. He can sit at the piano for hours, discoursing on composers from Rodgers to Prokofiev. On more personal topics he is reticent. He is

particularly uncomfortable about his personal fortune and tends to scale down the size of his wealth and possessions. In fact, he is sometimes criticized for being tight-fisted with his money. ("Andrew thought he was broke when he was down to his last three million pounds," says one British friend.)

His conversation, though, is an incomplete guide to the man; Lloyd Webber's essence lies in his music. "I don't think Andrew ever puts into words accurately

No one denies that the Lloyd Webbers' temperaments make for a volatile mix. "We are both totally impractical because we let our emotions take first place," says Brightman. "Nothing is ever bottled up. If we feel something, we'll say it. It's wonderful, because you always know where you are with Andrew."

Where Andrew is quiet and reserved, Brightman is vivacious and open; where he favors conservative suits that match his Tory politics, she tends to flamboyant costumes that round out her slim figure, luxuriant Burne-Jones tresses and alabaster skin.

The marriage has thrust the pair into the social spotlight. Says one of Lloyd Webber's close associates: "Sarah II has had quite an influence on his life. They have a certain life-style that he didn't know before. They go to a lot of parties and first nights. They entertain quite a bit. Sarah I was very much a country wife in the traditional English sense. Sarah II is more outgoing, more florid. She is more Zandra Rhodes; Sarah I, more Burberrys."

Photos of the 20-year-old Lloyd Webber from the time of *Superstar* show an awkward, long-haired youth blinking uncomfortably in the spotlight of fame—the phantom of his own opera. Now, in Britain at least, he is the most prominent musical figure since the Beatles, a fixture on TV talk shows who is fussed over and clutched at whenever he walks down a street or sits in a restaurant.

During his partnership with Rice, Lloyd Webber was content to let his more outgoing, voluble associate front for the pair. "Tim was a natural performer," remembers Lloyd Webber. "I was somewhat of an enigma. Since then I've had to learn to look at a camera, but I don't do chat shows where I am supposed to be funny, nor do I have a desperate urge to do the Carson show. But when I need to talk about the work, it is a different matter."

Somewhat disingenuously, Lloyd Webber professes not to relish his new status, to be unaware of the impact his growing personal fame will have on his box-office appeal.

"In the end," he insists, "it comes down to the quality of what you give them in the theater." So it does. And on that basis the canniest show composer of our time has long since confirmed his standing. But the opening of *Phantom* confirms something else too. The awkward London youth has grown up, conquered Broadway and become what he once only envisioned: Andrew Lloyd Webber, Superstar. —By Michael Walsh. Reported by Mary Cronin/New York with other bureaus



At work on his new show with lyricists Black and Hart
Humming the stuff dream musicals are made of.

what he thinks about anything," Rice has said. "Yet he puts into music precisely what he thinks about something. So you don't have to listen to what he says but what he writes, which is probably why he is a great composer."

To Lloyd Webber's chagrin, his relationship with his flashy wife has become a staple of London's racy tabloids. Brightman has been vilified as a "home wrecker" who came between Lloyd Webber and his first wife (referred to as Sarah I, while Brightman is Sarah II). Last year there were so many breathless "exclusives" about shouting matches between husband and wife and an affair that Brightman was allegedly having with an old boyfriend that Lloyd Webber slapped libel suits on several of the more gossipy tabloids. The papers settled or retracted, and Lloyd Webber sent the money to various charities.